

Listing of Claims:

Please cancel claims 1 – 10 and 14 without prejudice to the filing of any related divisional, continuation or continuation-in-part application, and please add new claims 23 and 24 as listed below. This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

1. – 10. (Cancelled)

11. (Original) An exopolysaccharide produced by a process comprising:
culturing a *Sphingomonas* bacteria selected from the group consisting of ATCC PTA-3487, ATCC PTA-3486, ATCC PTA-3485, ATCC PTA-3488, and mixtures thereof in a fermentation broth for a time and temperature effective for providing a sphingan exopolysaccharide in a slime form; and

recovering the sphingan exopolysaccharide from the fermentation broth with an alcohol precipitation,

wherein the method is effective for providing at least about 10 grams of sphingan exopolysaccharide per liter of broth.

12. (Original) An exopolysaccharide according to claim 11 wherein fermentation is conducted from about 48 to about 96 hours at a temperature of about 25°C to about 35°C.

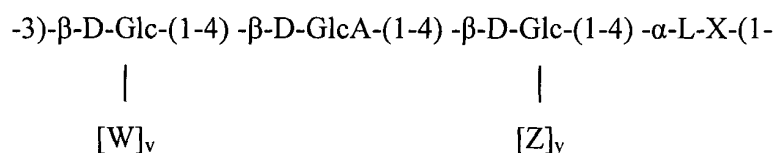
13. (Original) An exopolysaccharide according to claim 11 wherein from about 1 to about 1.5 volumes of alcohol are added to the fermentation broth.

14. (Cancelled)

15. (Original) An exopolysaccharide in a slime form, wherein the exopolysaccharide is produced by a *Sphingomonas* bacteria.

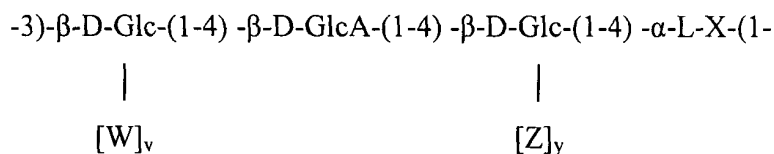
16. (Original) An exopolysaccharide in a slime form according to claim 15 wherein the exopolysaccharide in slime form is produced by *Sphingomonas* selected from the group consisting of ATCC PTA-3487, ATCC PTA-3486, ATCC PTA-3485, ATCC PTA-3488, and mixtures thereof.

17. (Original) An exopolysaccharide in a slime form according to claim 15 wherein the exopolysaccharide in slime form is a sphingan exopolysaccharide having the general formula



wherein Glc is glucose, GlcA is glucuronic acid or 2-deoxy-glucuronic acid, Rha is rhamnose, Man is mannose, X is Rha or Man, Z is attached to Glc residue 2 and is α -L-Rha-(1-4)- α -L-Rha, α -L-Man or α -L-Rha, W is attached to Glc residue number 1 and is β -D-Glc-(1-6)- α -D-Glc, β -D-Glc-(1-6)- β -D-Glc or α -L-Rha, subscripts v and y are 0, 0.33, 0.5, 0.67 or 1.

18. (Original) An exopolysaccharide in a slime form having the general formula



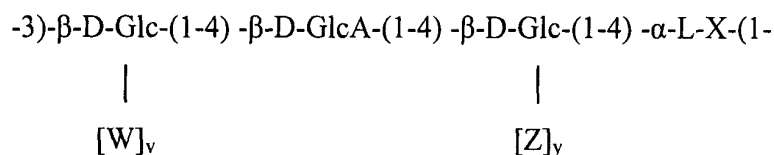
wherein Glc is glucose, GlcA is glucuronic acid or 2-deoxy-glucuronic acid, Rha is rhamnose, Man is mannose, X is Rha or Man, Z is attached to Glc residue 2 and is α -L-Rha-(1-4)- α -L-Rha, α -L-Man or α -L-Rha, W is attached to Glc residue number 1 and is β -D-Glc-(1-6)- α -D-Glc, β -D-Glc-(1-6)- β -D-Glc or α -L-Rha, subscripts v and y are 0, 0.33, 0.5, 0.67 or 1.

19. (Original) An exopolysaccharide in a slime form according to claim 18 wherein the exopolysaccharide in slime form is produced by *Sphingomonas* selected from the group consisting of ATCC PTA-3487, ATCC PTA-3486, ATCC PTA-3485, ATCC PTA-3488, and mixtures thereof.

20. (Original) An exopolysaccharide in a slime form produced by a *Sphingomonas* bacteria, wherein the *Sphingomonas* bacteria are grown in a submerged, aerated liquid culture, and wherein a concentration of dissolved oxygen exceeds about 5% of saturation of water after 24 hours of culturing.

21. (Original) An exopolysaccharide in a slime form according to claim 20 wherein the exopolysaccharide in slime form is produced by *Sphingomonas* selected from the group consisting of ATCC PTA-3487, ATCC PTA-3486, ATCC PTA-3485, ATCC PTA-3488, and mixtures thereof.

22. (Original) An exopolysaccharide in a slime form according to claim 21 wherein the exopolysaccharide in slime form is a sphingan exopolysaccharide having the general formula



wherein Glc is glucose, GlcA is glucuronic acid or 2-deoxy-glucuronic acid, Rha is Rhamnose, Man is mannose, X is Rha or Man, Z is attached to Glc residue 2 and is α -L-Rha-(1-4)- α -L-Rha, α -L-Man or α -L-Rha, W is attached to Glc residue number 1 and is β -D-Glc-(1-6)- α -D-Glc, β -D-Glc-(1-6)- β -D-Glc or α -L-Rha, subscripts v and y are 0, 0.33, 0.5, 0.67 or 1.

New Divisional Application
Preliminary Amendment

23. (New) The exopolysaccharide of claim 15 selected from the group consisting of gellan, welan, rhamsan, S-88, S-7, S-198, NW-11 and S-657.

24. (New) The exopolysaccharide of claim 23 selected from the group consisting of gellan, welan, S-7 and S-88.